

The Jacob Journal

A NEWSLETTER FROM SUPERVISOR DIANNE JACOB

MAY 1998

Can You Be Sure Your Child Is Safe?



When Jasmine Miller's parents dropped their infant daughter off at day-care last summer, the thought probably hadn't crossed their minds that it would be the last time they would see little Jasmine alive. Now, just a few months later, Jasmine's day-care operator is on trial. She's accused of murdering the six-month-old entrusted to her care.

Across town, the images of another "family child care home" tragedy are still fresh. A woman is accused of killing a 13-month-old boy named Oliver. According to news stories, he died of massive head injuries from severe shaking. In this case, Oliver Smith's mother had been unaware of complaints filed about the child care operator.

Today, many families of varying socio-economic status rely on child care providers of one type or another. In San Diego County, the vast majority of children are in "family child care homes". While the majority of these are staffed by good care givers with the interests of the children at heart, the "family child care home" setting is unfortunately the same setting in which Jasmine and Oliver's parents left their infants thinking they were safe.

Although child care itself has received much recent attention because of welfare reform - the safety and quality of child care has not been sufficiently addressed, nor has the current lack of parental information. Swift action must be taken now to make desperately needed change.

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Increase State inspections

"Family child care homes", although a popular choice among parents, are less frequently monitored than other child care alternatives such as child care centers.

Bathhouses are inspected quarterly. Bottled water companies are inspected monthly. California dairies are inspected every six months. By contrast, "family child care homes" are inspected only once every three years!

Elevators are inspected yearly. Massage parlors are inspected one or two times per year. Tattoo parlors are inspected at least once a year. And, over 2,500 hotels and motels in the County are inspected yearly. By contrast, "family child care homes" are inspected only once every three years!

Clearly, once every three years is not good enough! That's why my proposal calls for the County to work with the appropriate State agencies and child care experts to increase the frequency and quality of inspections. It's imperative that we place a higher priority on the safety of our children than we do on bathhouses and "body art".

Develop a Quality Rating System

A Quality Rating System, similar to the rating system used for restaurants, would provide a simple way for parents to find out how child care facilities measure up. Just like the big blue "A" in a restaurant window, a score on the child care rating scale would be a good indicator of the quality and safety of a child care facility.

Among the quality measures which parents might want rated are the number and type of toys available for children, whether or not the toys and activities are age-appropriate, how child

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IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Referrals & General Information

YMCA Child Care Resource Service
(619) 521-3055

San Diego County Family Child Care Assn.
(760) 736-2598

Exceptional Family Resource Center
(619) 268-8252 (800) 281-8252

San Diego Assn. for Education of Young Children
(619) 273-1773

Child Care Law Center (Tue & Thurs only)
(415) 495-5493

CA Child Care Health Line
(800) 333-3212

Advocates for Better Childcare (ABC)
(619) 670-8043 (760) 757-3721

License or Complaint Information

CA Community Care Licensing
(619) 467-4388

Subsidized Child Care

County Health & Human Services Agency
Child Care Section
(619) 531-5164

Child Development Associates
(619) 427-4411

Head Start Programs
(619) 444-0503 (760) 788-1927

YMCA Child Care Resource Service
(619) 521-3055

Training & Education

Childcare Activity & Training Service Line
(619) 531-6225 (760) 738-4352

Child Abuse Reporting

County Health & Human Services Agency
Child Protective Services
(800) 344-6000

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care operators interact with the children in their care, and the educational or professional background of the child care provider. With a rating system, a quick and easy-to-understand measure of these quality-of-care indicators will be readily available.

Create a Parental Education Plan

Child care is an extension of the family, so it's important for parents to be able to make good choices in placing their children in the safest and best child care setting. For parents to feel comfortable, they must be provided with a battery of information to help them make informed decisions.

By creating an aggressive parental education plan to include crucial information readily available to parents, they will be able to make well informed decisions on the placement of their children. Oliver Smith's mother testified before the Board of Supervisors that had she been aware of the complaints against the family child care home, she would not have placed Oliver there in the first place. Oliver might be alive today.

Not only should parents be aware that they have the right to information about complaints against a child care operator, they should also know that there is already a great deal of information already available on a variety of topics related to child care. Topics; such as what to look for in a home, types of behavior to look for in their children, and what to do if they are concerned; are covered in a variety of resource publications. Unfortunately, too many parents don't know that the information is available and that they have access to it.

There are never any guarantees, but changes must be made to assure parents, as much as possible, their children are safe when they are at work. The Board of Supervisors has repeatedly placed a high priority on this County's children. Hopefully, with these initiatives, we can prevent future tragedies.

on the web
www.diannejacob.com

Grants Equal \$1.2M in Community Building Blocks!

Each year, San Diego County and several of the region's incorporated cities receive Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) from the federal government. I'm proud to say that \$1.2 million was allocated in the Second District.

The Cities of Lemon Grove and Poway received \$127,898 and \$209,907, respectively. And, many unincorporated communities win, too!

In Lakeside, \$245,000 will be spent on three projects. Sidewalk design for Parkside Street from Channel Road almost all the way to River Road is just one. At Lindo Lake, watch for new playground equipment and better access for the disabled. Also in the works: another parking lot complete with landscaping and walkways. Plus, more than \$60,000 has been allocated for the Lakeside Revitalization Program!

Not too far away in Ramona, \$140,000 will be spent on three other projects, all of which were identified as community priorities in the Ramona Revitalization process. Twenty thousand dollars were identified for the Santa Maria Creek Bed clean-up, \$40,000 for the

design of an outdoor basketball court in Collier Park, and \$80,000 was set-aside for Senior Center improvements once a plan is approved by the community.

Alpiners will benefit from an added \$106,310 awarded to renovate and enlarge the Community Center to allow additional child care. The number of child care slots will increase from 76 to 100!

In Julian, more than \$210,000 has been approved for renovation of the athletic fields at Julian High School. This will supplement the \$130,000 awarded last year. Improvements include construction of the athletic field, electrical, drainage, and irrigation. Also in town: \$42,500 to supplement school district funds for a new community room.

Backcountry communities will benefit, too! In Boulevard, look for improvements to the fire station parking lot and roof replacement at the Community Center. Plus, \$50,000 was identified for a fire hydrant retrofit in Campo. In Jacumba, more than \$110,000 was reimbursed to the Jacumba Community Services District so the water line project can continue.

Supervisor Dianne Jacob proudly serves the communities of:

Agua Caliente Springs ♦ Allied Gardens ♦ Alpine ♦ Barrett ♦ Blossom Valley ♦ Bostonia ♦ Boulevard ♦ Campo ♦ Canebrake ♦ Casa de Oro ♦ Crest ♦ Cuyamaca ♦ Dehesa ♦ Del Cerro ♦ Descanso ♦ Dulzura ♦ El Cajon ♦ Eucalyptus Hills ♦ Fernbrook ♦ Flinn Springs ♦ Granite Hills ♦ Guatay ♦ Harbison Canyon ♦ Jacumba ♦ Jamul ♦ Julian ♦ La Mesa ♦ Lake Morena ♦ Lakeside ♦ Lemon Grove ♦ Mount Laguna ♦ Mount Helix ♦ Pine Hills ♦ Pine Valley ♦ Potrero ♦ Poway ♦ Ramona ♦ Rancho San Diego ♦ Rolando ♦ San Carlos ♦ Santa Ysabel ♦ Santee ♦ Shelter Valley ♦ Spring Valley ♦ Tecate ♦ Tierra del Sol ♦ Vallecitos

...and the Indian reservations of:

Barona ♦ Campo ♦ Cosmit ♦ Cuyapaipe ♦ Inaja ♦ Jamul ♦ La Posta ♦ Manzanita ♦ Mesa Grande ♦ Santa Ysabel ♦ Sycuan ♦ Viejas

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Name _____

Signature _____

Company _____

Mailing Address _____

City, Zip _____

Phone _____

We hope to hear from you soon!

May 98

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